

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

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MARKEY ANNOUNCES "NO" VOTE ON PERMANENT TRADE DEAL WITH CHINA

Lawmaker cites nuclear proliferation, human rights concerns

Washington, DC: U.S. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior Democrat in the House, announced today that he will vote "No" when the issue of China's trade relations with the United States is deliberated in the House next week. He released the following statement:

"I have concluded after careful thought and a thorough review of the many issues surrounding our relations with China that I will oppose the granting of *permanent* normal trade relations (PNTR) with the Peoples Republic of China at this time.

"The debate has been cast as an 'all or nothing' choice by those who believe it is simply a vote on trade, but I have concluded that this vote transcends trade.

"Many of the hoped-for trade benefits will likely be preserved even if we fall back on a time-limited, non-permanent trade agreement with China. I believe that those benefits will be maintained because of the commitment of both China and the U.S. to 'Most Favored Nation' status under our existing 1979 bilateral trade agreement, and the strong interest that China has in maintaining the favorable treatment of their goods by the U.S., their largest export market.

"What will not be preserved is the current arrangement where progress on issues such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, forced labor, the deteriorating human rights situation, and environmental concerns cannot be raised or conditioned in any way on trade concessions.

"I believe that this accounts for why China is refusing to agree not to retransfer nuclear weapons materials or technology obtained from the U.S. to other countries. That is why China is jailing dissidents who support democratic reforms or simply disagree with the Communist Party. That is why China refuses to allow access to sites alleged to be using forced labor to compete unfairly with American workers, despite agreements to do so.

"China has correctly concluded that if we are unwilling to use the leverage of trade to seek progress on any of these other issues, we have no effective leverage at all.

"I have weighed carefully the arguments that a full, unconditional robust trade relationship with China will lead eventually to a more democratic China. Human rights activists strongly disagree with this formula, but as someone who has helped to craft much of the legislation that has fueled the growth of the global Internet,

telecommunications and financial services revolution, I know this argument is legitimate and well-framed. The Internet, especially, will have a subversive impact on a state that rules with central control. But it does not answer immediate concerns about China's role as a weapons proliferator. Moreover, we should be alert to the fact that China intends to try to exert state control over the Internet, a concept that is totally unfamiliar to American users, but is quite familiar to those who have lived in a police state. Where we animate the New Economy with democratic values, in China they will attempt to animate the New Economy with fear. In the short term, at least, this will considerably compromise the power of the Internet to erode the power of the Communist bosses.

"I am also sensitive to the damage that can be done to the forces for economic reform within the Chinese leadership should we turn down PNTR. But we should also be mindful of the support that the imminent deployment of a U.S. National Missile Defense System is going to give to the hard liners in China. The deployment of a shield aimed at North Korea, but which spawns a new arms spiral in China, is likely to compromise much of the good will we are seeing through trade.

"Finally, it appears that China's accession to the WTO, which will occur regardless of the outcome of this vote, will void the current ban on the import of cheap semiautomatic assault weapons from China. The President issued that ban at my request as part of a previous extension of trade relations with China. But under WTO rules, we will apparently be required to accept such weapons unless we are willing to accept the penalties that attach to banning the import of a product that can legally be sold in the U.S.

"In short, I do not support the permanent de-linking of these subjects from the subject of trade with China. The United States has always stood for more than the triumph of capitalism. Our moral authority in the world obliges us to maintain the link between economic progress and the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the trampling of human rights. We stand not just for commerce, but for commerce with a conscience. The best way to assert that principle is to continue to force China to make concessions in those areas in return for our concessions on trade.

"The right vote is to vote 'No' as long as China continues to snub its nose at these critical issues."